**Laura Thompson – Final Lab Reflection**

1. **Reflect on a lesson or an activity you found particularly challenging or rewarding in this course. What was it? How will you apply what you learned through that activity in future SEL and patient/client interactions?** (400 words)

The activity I found the most challenging during this SEL lab was the module on planning an emergency menu and cleaning schedule for John at the House of Worship. I really did not realize the enormity of what goes into planning in an emergency situation. Not only that, but it was also difficult to ensure that the emergency menu provided all the necessary nutrients, especially when resources are limited, for all residents. It was also important to consider the shelf life of food and ensure my menu had mostly non-perishable items that can be stored for long periods. Finding foods that are both nutritious and have a long shelf life proved to be tricky. Other things that I did not think to consider before this assignment were limited storage space and limited cooking space in an emergency. Some items may require refrigeration, which might not be available during an emergency. Additionally, catering to different dietary needs adds another layer of complexity. I found it most difficult to make different menus for different dietary needs with the budget available. I decided to liberalize the diets as much as possible during the emergency. Thinking of how to schedule people to ensure proper preparation, cooking, and cleaning was done effectively and was fair to the residents was difficult as well. The biggest difficulty was the budget. Budget constraints can limit the variety and quantity of food that can be included in the emergency menu. Milk and water alone ate most of the budget that John had collected. I did add alternatives and solutions to increasing the budget. Finally, it was difficult to consider how culture and comfort of familiar foods may help maintain morale during stressful times. Balancing this with the practical planning of emergency food was challenging.

 This is an activity that will be used in real life situations as a dietitian that is vital in helping plan emergency food and menus. Some steps I will use in future interactions will be to plan for dietary needs while considering storage space, cooking availability, budget, rotating stockpiles by using a first-in-first-out approach, and simplifying meals. By incorporating these steps, I will be better prepared to handle future emergencies with a well-thought-out and practical menu.

1. **Thinking back on your previous case study presentations, what did you notice about yourself in your presentations? What attributes did you identify that will help you be successful moving through the program as a future RDN? What personality traits did you notice that enhanced your self-awareness? Did any themes emerge for you personally as you progressed through your SEL?** (400 words)

When thinking about past presentations and the ones done for this class, including written deliverables, I noticed several attributes that will help me as I finish progressing through the program and in the future as a dietitian. One attribute is confidence and clarity. The more I talk and present my findings to various audiences, the more confidence I will gain as well as the more clearly I will be able to present the information. This will be crucial for effectively communicating complex nutritional information as a future RDN. The more I present, the more I am also engaged with my audiences, and they are engaged with me. This skill is important for educating clients and the public about nutrition. Activities in this SEL and past SEL experiences also build on my ability to analyze case studies and draw meaningful conclusions will be essential in assessing and planning nutritional interventions for my clients. Dietetics is a diverse field and being able to adapt my presentation style based on the audience's needs shows flexibility.

This SEL class also helped with other traits that have enhanced my own self-awareness such as empathy, resilience, and curiosity. Recognizing my ability to understand and share the feelings of others can enhance the different client interactions I may have, making me a more compassionate and effective dietitian. Further, being able to handle feedback and challenges during presentations can help with resilience. Finally, my eagerness to learn from my audience and ask questions during my presentations can drive continuous professional development. These emerging themes create a growth mindset as I continue my journey in dietetics. A growth mindset will help with collaboration and communication in the future.

1. **How did you practice empathy with yourself throughout this lab course? How will you continue to enhance your ability to be empathetic with your patients/clients and yourself? (400 words)**

Practicing empathy in this SEL lab has been crucial for understanding how I can build strong relationships and provide excellent care in the future. First, being empathetic to John’s situation and the residents of the town who may need food, shelter, and other emergency services during a time of stress is vital to how I can help in future situations. Even acknowledging how stressful an emergency can be is a form of empathy. Each emergency takes an emotional toll on people, and this gave me new appreciation for the planning that takes place before the fact to ensure that less emotional stress is reached. It also gave me a chance to “walk in their shoes” and understand the daily challenges faced by John and the staff as well as the residents of the town. For example, not having a big grocery store in the town can be challenging for residents and for pre-planning for an emergency. This helps me appreciate their perspectives so I can respond more compassionately.

Empathy also includes actively listening. This is a skill I have been working on in all classes and SEL as I go through the program and this lab is no exception. I tried to present as if I was talking to John and the medical staff which means engaging fully with them, giving them my full attention, anticipating questions I think they may ask, and asking my own questions to show genuine interest in the residents and the severity of the emergency situation. Whether it was this specific activity or other activities during this lab, I tried very hard to use compassionate communication, kind language, and supportive, non-judgmental words.

One thing that was not necessarily done in this lab since it was specific activities and not in person experiences is follow up. Follow up can be a way to show empathy as it can help me check in with people after I have helped them to see how they are doing. This shows that I care about their well-being beyond immediate interactions. The evaluation tool was one way to follow up with how well the emergency planning went, gather valuable feedback, and better prepare for next time. I also reflected on in person interactions, lab activities, and presentations better respond or improve my presentation for the next time. By incorporating these practices, I can improve empathy and build stronger, more supportive relationships.

1. **What changes did you notice happening within yourself as you progressed through these SEL experiences in this lab? What were some positive changes you noticed that brought about feelings of confidence or happiness? What were some that caused you a bit of worry or anxiety? Were there any dichotomies that presented themselves that you processed as a future RDN?** (400 words)

As I reflect on this SEL lab, I learned a lot about myself. One positive change is an increase in self-awareness. I am always watching for strengths and areas for improvement as I progress through this lab and past SEL experiences. As my capabilities improve, this boosts my confidence. Positive improvement continued in communication, empathy, problem solving, relationship building, confidence, and knowledge.

Passing the ServSafe test was a good boost to my confidence that I am knowledgeable in this profession. I got to practice this in real life as I had two friends who asked me questions related to food service. One was on food safety. A friend had left her food out for over six hours in her car, but it was in a sealed thermos. I was able to talk about temperature control and food safety when food is not properly stored. Another friend asked about my recipe for low fat, low sugar, high fiber blueberry muffins. She has diabetes and wanted to know the carb count in the muffins. Knowing how to make a recipe in Cronometer with a nutrition label, I was able to share the nutrition contents with her on carbs and added sugars so that she could determine if this would be a good recipe to try for herself as a diabetic. These real-life interactions led to feelings of confidence and happiness as I felt successful and knowledgeable to provide nutrition related information. Recognizing my progress through this lab and the program instills a sense of pride and confidence in my abilities.

One thing that caused me worry during this lab was time management. There was a lot of deliverables due in both the class and the lab and it was difficult to manage all the assignments and make sure I had thoroughly understood the assignment while also completing them in a timely manner. I was able to keep up, but at times I felt rushed to complete certain assignments and felt they were not my best work. Another worry was the uncertainty of navigating new and unfamiliar situations as I had not dealt with an emergency situation prior to this class.

One dichotomy I had to wrestle with was self-care vs time management. Ensuring I was still taking care of my own well-being while being dedicated to my studies is essential to avoid burnout. Another dichotomy was the balance between developing confidence in my skills while remaining open to learning and acknowledging that I do not have all the answers yet.

1. **Review the work you have done in this course and select a piece to place in your Capstone portfolio. Include a brief reflection that addresses the following questions:**
	* **How do you think the skills you learned by completing this piece will help you succeed in the profession?**
	* **How does this piece reflect your professional and academic growth?**

There were several pieces of work that taught me a lot that I considered putting in my portfolio. However, I ultimately decided to include my emergency preparedness presentation for John and the medical staff at the House of Worship. I included this piece as it encompassed all the skills of emergency planning as well as all the skills of presenting nutrition topics to an audience. This presentation really challenged me to critically think about how I could best help a town of residents in an emergency situation while considering all factors and needs of the residents. It reflects my professional growth as I had to consider how to best present that information to John so that it made sense to the audience and answered concerns, he or other staff may have.

**Screenshot – Emergency Preparedness Presentation** (highlighted in blue)

